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Making Fun of Franco: Representations and Caricatures of
Spanish Fascism in the Films El espíritu de la colmena, Cría
cueros and El laberinto del fauno

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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Making Fun of Franco:

Representations and Caricatures of Spanish Fascism in the Films

El espíritu de la colmena, Cría cueros and El laberinto del fauno.

Elizabeth Pruchnicki

December 12, 2014

Honors Capstone

Abstract

The end of the Spanish Civil War marked the beginning of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, which lasted more than 35 years. Throughout this time, he systemized terror, executing more than 100,000 republican sympathizers in the first few years of his regime and marginalizing the remainder of the population. Therefore, the Fascist Era lasting from 1940-1975 is one plagued with strained relationships, ambiguous loyalties and distant relatives. The films *El espíritu de la colmena* by Victor Erice, *Cría cuervos* by Carlos Saura and *El laberinto del fauno* by Guillermo del Toro's illustrate these kinds of challenges, from the point of view of young heroines living under this Spanish regime.

These films were chosen because they all focus on a young female protagonist as she tries to navigate her familial relationships, confinement, and the mental trauma from living through this period of extreme difficulty. In order to overcome these issues, the heroines each attempt to find solace in a different type of escapism.

Executive Summary

Under the Franco regime, censorship prohibited most Spanish filmmakers from creating films that critiqued the regime. Therefore, directors learned to subvert the Office of Censorship by distorting their criticisms.

Shrouding the realities of the Franco regime in obscure allegories, directors such as Victor Erice and Carlos Saura were able to premiere their films with few alterations. More than forty years after the allegorical films of the 1970s, Guillermo del Toro reminded the world of the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's rule with his internationally sensationalized film *El laberinto del fauno*.

These representations of the regime have permeated time and space because the effects of Franco's tyranny still ring poignantly across the Atlantic ocean, as the descendants of Spanish refugees cling to their multiple identities: remembering their ancestry in Spain while respecting the horrors which forced them into exile.

The films *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno* demonstrate the difficulties of living in Spain under Franco's rule. The films utilize a young heroine in order to expose the greater political allegories in each film. This thesis is divided into three themes of criticism: home, family, and the concept of how we remember. The final chapter is devoted to a discussion of the monsters in *El laberinto del fauno* and how those monsters are less dangerous to the mental stability of the heroine than the horrors of her own imagination.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In a 2007 interview, Mexican director Guillermo del Toro said that working on the film *El laberinto del fauno* was “a morbidly fascinating subject, and for a Mexican, extremely close to home.”¹ The film is set in the immediate aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, soon after Franco took complete control of the nation. However, as opposed to being remembered as a great leader of Spain, one of the legacies is that the effects of his tyranny can still be felt tangibly across the Atlantic Ocean, more than forty years after his death. His regime forced thousands of Spaniards into exile, and Mexico was the only nation actively accepting Spanish refugees. While making *El laberinto del fauno*, del Toro claims that although the film is one of his masterpieces, he was too emotionally attached to the subject. He said that depicting the brutality and savagery of the Spanish Civil War was a torturous process. He almost could not finish the film.²

Del Toro focuses his film on the inherent polarization of the “vanquished against the vanquishers.”³ The Spanish Civil War was one of the most disastrous conflicts in all of history. The way the nationalist troops moved, beginning in the south and ending in the north, keeping strongholds in Catholic headquarters like Burgos, ensured that not a single Spanish civilian had the luxury of being apolitical. The war forced every Spaniard onto a side, and as depicted in novels like Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, it became increasingly clear that most soldiers were not soldiers at all. Most people who fought and died in the Spanish Civil War were men who were forced to take sides under fear of execution or fear for their families. The Civil War ripped families apart more drastically, even, than the Civil War in the United States as the

¹ Del Toro In. Newman, B. (2007, Jan 12). ‘Labyrinth’ director steps up tackles difficult issues. *Oakland Tribune*.

² Del Toro, G. (Director). (2006). *El laberinto del fauno* [Motion picture]. Mexico: Warner Brothers.

³ Marsha Kinder In. Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press. 155

nation was torn apart by conflicting ideologies which were omnipresent throughout the country. The Spanish Civil War was a war of ideology, but moreover, it was a war that exemplified all of the world's ongoing conflicts— Catholicism vs. secularism, nationalism vs. regionalism, traditionalism vs. progress, and, most important, fascism vs. socialism—in a single country.

The Spanish Civil War was closely watched around the world for many reasons. It was a blatant precursor to World War II, with Italy and Germany funding Franco's incursions across Spain and northern Africa, but it was also the first war in which civilians were a targeted population. Additionally, as so many countries remained neutral throughout the conflict, there was a notable push from individuals to go help the cause. The Spanish Civil War is one of the most precious examples in human history where thousands of people from across the world, with no direct invested interest, volunteered to fight and, in many cases, sacrificed their lives to further a cause in which they believed. This is why the Spanish Civil War is still studied with such heartbreak— so many people fought “the good fight,”⁴ and so many people lost.

As men died in battle, families were separated and children were orphaned. This is why I decided to focus on the imaginative journey of a young heroine. Each of the young girls, Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana in *Cría cuervos* and Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno*, are effectively orphaned. Although each of the girls has parents, at least at the beginning of the film, they become metaphorically orphaned by the mental vacancies exhibited by their relatives.

As Kim Edwards states, “War is hell, but freedom requires sacrifice.”⁵ The use of children in postwar films is a radical way to portray the sacrifice of war. Instead of focusing on the soldier's death on a battlefield, the way one would typically picture the sacrifice of war, the

⁴ Buckner, N. (Director), Dore, M. (Director), & Sills, S. (Director). (1984). *The good fight: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War* [Motion picture]. United States: Abraham Lincoln Brigade Film Project.

⁵ Edwards, K. (2008). Alice's little sister: Exploring “Pan's Labyrinth.” *Screen Education* 49, 145.

directors follow the lives of young children as they inevitably succumb to their own form of post-traumatic stress disorder. The idea to use children as the focus of postwar struggles emanates from Italian neorealism. In *Bicycle Thieves*,⁶ there is a noticeable double standard between how the children are treated by their parents versus what they are exposed to in society. The little boy in the film goes to bed hungry each night—he knows that his family is too poor to survive. However, his parents try to preserve his innocence by keeping him oblivious to the horrors of staunch poverty. Despite their attempts, he can still *feel* the desperation in how his community lives. There is a double standard integrated into every child who is raised in a postwar society. They can feel the horrors and the shame, but they are still children. This double standard is severely exploited in the films of Erice, Saura and del Toro, because the children inevitably grow up with a type of PTSD. The conflict in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos* are based on the heroine's hallucinations, which are a product of their strained familial situations. In *El laberinto del fauno*, the hallucinations are less defined, as the lines between magic and realism are purposefully blurred, to the point that they become one and the same.

This thesis pays homage to the great auteurs, past and present, of Spanish cinema, Victor Erice, Carlos Saura and the Mexican national, Guillermo del Toro, as they try to hold Franco accountable for his brutal regime. These three directors chose to represent the brutalities of the Spanish Civil War through the eyes of little girls. In each film, the story focuses on the imaginative journey of a young heroine as she becomes the object of our voyeurism. By using such a character to portray the coming generations, the directors are making a very clear critique about the future generations in Spain. The children who are growing up under the Franco regime will either rebel against the current status quo, or they will succumb to the pressures of society

⁶ De Sica, V. (Director). (1948). *Bicycle thieves* [Motion picture]. Italy: Produzioni De Sica.

and surrender their thoughts to their hallucinations and live solely within the capacities of their own imaginations.

The imagination plays a central role in each of these films because it allows for caricatures to take shape. The majority of the political allegories in the films can be found only when taken in the context of the girls' imaginations. In each film, the girls are predominantly held within the confines, however grandiose, of their homes. The juxtaposition "between a tyrannical patriarch and a rebellious child"⁷ helps to illustrate the complex political allegory of a state with too much power, reigning over its unwilling citizens.

This thesis will focus on the caricatures in three films: Victor Erice's masterpiece from 1973, still considered one of the most canonical works of Spanish cinema, *El espíritu de la colmena*; Carlos Saura's *Cría cuervos* from 1976; and finally, *El laberinto del fauno* (2006), the work of a modern auteur, Guillermo del Toro. The heroines are each characterized by their vivid imaginations. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana hallucinates about the image of *Frankenstein* and befriends a fugitive Republican soldier; Ana in *Cría cuervos* (played by the same actress, Ana Torrent), is fascinated by death and tries to kill multiple members of her family; finally, Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno*, is the physical point of contact between the Spain of 1944 and a subterranean magical realm over which she reigns as Princess Moana.

Each of these films directly juxtaposes the imagined with reality. This expressly forces the viewer to judge which state of being has a greater impact on its subject. A perpetual theme throughout each film is the superiority of what is "real." However, the films continuously argue that the "real" is a construct of the adult world. In fact, the films further argue that by accepting reality, adults have effectively cut themselves off from a much more potent source of

⁷ Sanchez, F. (2012). A post-national spanish imaginary. A case-study: Pan's Labyrinth. *The Comparatist* 36, 141.

information: their own experiences. In the book, *The Cinema of Spain and Portugal*, the author describes this dichotomy as follows: “Adults blindly accept conflict while children can’t fathom the causes.”⁸ The directors Erice, Saura and del Toro have taken the opportunity to illustrate the depth of a child’s emotion in times of political turmoil and to hold Franco accountable, even generations after his tyranny. Although children of the 1940s did not fight in the Spanish Civil War, they have grown up in a society with a palpable inability to comprehend or come to term with the events of its past. The effects of this “historical blackout”⁹ can still be felt today.

Each director uses a little girl’s imagination as a vehicle to transmit political critique. Therein lies the most important caricature in each of these films— they exploit the diminutive attributes of a child’s imagination in order to draw attention to the injustices of the Franco regime and the silence and stillness that pervaded postwar Spain.

Erice and Saura, both auteurs working under the constraints of censorship, used caricatures to avoid government regulation. Censorship was rolled out in full force immediately following the end of the Civil War in 1939, and it remained a significant factor in the film industry until 1977, a full two years after Franco died. The censorship was applied inconsistently and, at times, rather arbitrarily,¹⁰ but it was an official mandate for more than 25 years. In addition to the censor, No-Do’s became a degrading force in the Spanish national cinema. No-Do’s, or *noticias oficiales o documentales*, were initiated in 1942, and they remained a compulsory segment of any film screening until 1976.¹¹ They were government-sponsored newsreels that played before most movies in a theater. According to the regime, No-Do’s gave

⁸ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press, 152.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Jordan, B. & Allinson, M. (2005). *Spanish Cinema: A student’s guide*. Great Britain: Hodder Arnold.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

citizens all of the necessary information about life in Spain.¹² The No-Do's attacked filmmakers who wanted to depict an unfiltered portrayal of Spanish life. In effect, No-Do's inhibited any documentaries from being made during this time, and they relegated the genre to a superficial portrayal of governmental misinformation. Together, censorship and the *noticias oficiales o documentales* ensured that no director could make a film depicting the harsh realities of the Civil War or its effects on Spanish civilians.

Due to the strict guidelines for any film being produced in Spain between 1939 and 1977, directors had to be creative with their subjects. Thus was born the need for the caricature. The Spanish cinema has employed this technique for the better part of its lengthy history. Beginning in the 1950s, when the Spanish film industry gained traction, filmmakers where stifled by the heavy censorship of the Franco regime. Directors were forced to hide their critiques in each film's subtleties. In many instances, these critiques were created in the form of a caricature. Many of the films examined in the following chapters, especially those depicting the Spanish Civil War, place the heart of their criticism in the *feel* of the movie, instead of through any explicit discussion of the injustices and hypocrisy of Spanish society. The word *caricature* comes from the old Italian word, *caricat*, which means "to distort."¹³ Ultimately, that was the goal of these Spanish filmmakers: to distort their criticisms to such a degree that the Office of Censorship could not recognize the immediate significance of the film. From this humble beginning, the word *caricature* has begun to encompass a much more grotesque, and at times, camp-like definition, such as "a picture, description, or imitation of a person or thing in which

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Caricature (n.d.) In *Dictionary.com online*.

certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect,”¹⁴ or “a picture, description, etc., ludicrously exaggerating the peculiarities or defects of persons or things.”¹⁵

Although these definitions reflect the common usage of the word *caricature* today, I prefer to analyze the films in this paper in keeping with its more traditional definition of a distortion from reality. The filmmakers Erice, Saura and del Toro subtly exaggerate certain characteristics, which is sufficient, in the context of this paper, to constitute a caricature.

In *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos*, and *El laberinto del fauno*, there are four distinctive ways in which the caricatures are disseminated. Imagination is the focus of all the caricatures; however, it is spread over four different themes. Three of these themes are sacrosanct aspects of fascist life: the home, family and memory. The last theme in the caricature of imagination is arguably the most important because it is where viewers can draw the most obvious parallels between the characters in a film and the political powers of the time. The final theme focuses on monstrosity and on how it is used to hyperbolize reality.

¹⁴ Caricature (n.d.) In *Oxford English Dictionary online*.

¹⁵ Caricature (n.d.) In *Dictionary.com online*.

Chapter 2: The Home

In 1967, Luis Buñuel's film *El Ángel Exterminador* premiered,¹⁶ a movie which featured an incredibly simple plot, but incorporated very difficult themes. At its core, the film is about a series of upper-class dinner guests who are trapped in a house and cannot leave for many days. This is an important theme throughout Spanish cinema. Although *El Ángel Exterminador* is technically a Mexican film, and Buñuel made it almost thirty years after his exile from Spain, it is clearly a commentary on governmental inabilities to solve basic problems.

Buñuel's film featured a literal prison— a house from which no one could escape. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno*, the heroines are most generally portrayed within the confines of their homes, although they have the physical capability to leave if they desire. Francisco Sánchez described the process as “a major tendency in contemporary visual production to represent political and social issues through the lens of *familial* spaces.”¹⁷ It is perfectly sensical that the familial spaces lend themselves to be a symbol of the mother country. The home, in this sense, is a caricature of the country— everything bad that happens within the confines of the house is an allegory for what is happening in the greater nation. The caricature exaggerates the relationships between the disinterested political powers and the rebellious citizens. The metaphor of the house as a prison, whether implicit or explicit in its depiction, relates to the entire country of Spain in this period. No one could escape, and most people were stuck in their circumstances, regardless of how much wealth or prestige they had accumulated before the war.

¹⁶ Buñuel, L. (Director). (1962). *El ángel exterminador* [Motion picture]. Mexico: Producciones Gustavo Alatríste de la Hispanidad.

¹⁷ Sanchez, F. (2012). A post-national spanish imaginary. A case-study: Pan's Labyrinth. *The Comparatist* 36, 140.

In all three films, the heroines use their imaginations to fill the void inherent in this postwar society. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana hallucinates about herself through the image of Frankenstein. She sees herself as a monster and spends the majority of the film trying to make herself an intangible spirit. During the opening credits, one of the children's drawings shows the little house with the well, which she visits many times in the film. The little house with the well is symbolic because it is the physical manifestation of Ana's imagination— it's her place of escape. In *Cría cuervos*, the photo albums, also scrolling throughout the opening credits, serve as the referent for escapism amidst a society entrenched in an immoral political system.

The photographs in *Cría cuervos* represent many things, but one of the most important is the depiction of faraway places and distant relatives. There are many instances in the film when a character will talk about a city other than Madrid. Amelia talks to Anselmo about Burgos in one of the flashbacks, and how they met there. Aunt Paulina discusses San Sebastián with Nicolas, Amelia's husband, as they try to relive their romantic past together.

The photos become bridges between what the characters desire and what they are able to achieve in life. There is one quite disorienting scene in which Ana imagines that she has thrown herself off of a neighboring building, either in an attempt to escape the stifling atmosphere of her home or to actually kill herself. It is a seminal scene in the film, because it marks Ana's journey, rather early in the film, as she becomes a rebellious citizen, always trying to escape the rigid confines of Franco's Spain. Finally, in *El laberinto del fauno*, the escape from the house, whether imagined or real, is the subterranean world. It is completely unnecessary to argue whether or not Ofelia's kingdom is a real or imagined realm because she believes in it wholeheartedly. What is interesting about Ofelia's magical realm is its existence directly beneath the old mill where she is living with Captain Vidal and her mother. Ofelia's magical realm is shown

consistently juxtaposed against the Spain of 1944, making the subterranean world seem more real, while encouraging even more parallels between the horrors of Vidal's rule and the tasks Ofelia must complete to gain reentry into her kingdom.

The house creates a physical point of contact against which the characters attempt to rebel. The heroines seek an asylum outside of their homes and, typically, they find refuge in their own imaginations. In addition, however, each girl finds herself conferring with a book, especially in *El laberinto del fauno*. The fairytales in this film keep Ofelia firmly tethered to her true identity as princess. Ofelia puts all her hope in her fairy tales, and she receives a lot of criticism for it from her mother, stepfather and even Mercedes. However, Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena* and Ana in *Cría cuervos* rely on different types of fiction. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana is consumed by the film *Frankenstein*. Her obsession with this escapism becomes quite dangerous to her character development because she believes that she is a monster similar to Frankenstein. Ana in *Cría cuervos* repeatedly visits her senile grandmother and talks with her about the photographs. She revisits the same scrapbook many times. The scrapbook in this context becomes a storybook told only in visuals. Although the scrapbook depicts real people and real events, they are fictionalized for Ana because she did not live through them. She remembers a photograph, and she may remember an accurate story about the photo, but she still has the innocence of a bystander, or of someone who was told how history unfolded, but played no part in its unraveling.

The "imagined" is a perversion of reality, but it is something that allows for the subject to escape from reality's horrors, or in the cases of the three heroines, their imaginations allow them to escape the fundamentally unsatisfying nature of their lives. It lets them escape their loneliness. The imagination can, at times, feel more real than reality, a fact that is especially true for

children. In each of these films, the concept of imagination distinguishes the child's world from the adult world, as adults become consumed by their stable, yet maniacal, sadness. This vacuum isolates them from the rest of their families because they learned during the war that what is real, however harsh, is real, and everything else is based on lies.

Chapter 3: Family

Franco's regime attempted to build a society that would mimic the preexisting dominant class structure: the nuclear family. He had built a nation under a stringently patriarchal society and wanted its citizens to follow this example. The 1942 film *Raza*,¹⁸ by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, was reportedly drafted by Francisco Franco himself. Franco supposedly wanted to dramatize and popularize his idealized family in the national cinema. In addition, *Raza* is the best example of a film from the regime's favorite genre, *Cine de cruzada*, which consists of films that feature crusades and war movies.¹⁹ *Raza* follows the life of a stereotypical Spanish family: a father, mother, three sons and a daughter. The Churruca family is the perfect fascist household. The father was a war hero, the mother a housewife; the daughter gets married to a nice nationalist boy from their town, and the eldest son, José, becomes a nationalist fighter. The middle son, Pedro, chooses to fight for the Republic, and Jaime, the youngest son, becomes a priest. Needless to say, the republican son has an abrupt change of heart and converts his loyalty to the fascists.

Inevitably, *Raza* was a caricature of the desires of the Franco regime. The film most closely follows the story of the eldest brother, who valiantly gets shot by the republicans— yet does not die. The priest is killed— a sacrifice in the name of God and country. These relationships are very realistic for the Spanish Civil War, in which families were torn apart by sons' differing ideologies. However, *Raza* idealizes the priest, Jaime, and José, who both fought for national unity and family.

¹⁸ Sáenz de Heredia, J.L. (Director). (1942). *Raza* [Motion picture]. Spain: Cancilleria del Consejo.

¹⁹ Jordan, B. & Allinson, M. (2005). *Spanish Cinema: A student's guide*. Great Britain: Hodder Arnold.

Although the Franco regime tried to promote films like *Raza* during the 1940s, the regime instead received submissions from most other genres. In the decades to come, the directors would become braver and feature irrevocably broken families, such as those in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos*. The family in *Raza* was strengthened by the hardships of war. That is the most egregious caricature that Franco could have put in his film. In reality, we know that most Spanish families did not finish the war happier than they were before. This is one of the many reasons that Franco's *Cine de cruzada* quickly fell into obscurity. This particular type of cinema blatantly gratified war and tried to impose a new interpretation of history on citizens who had only just stopped fighting. Therefore, *Raza* is now attached to the propaganda genre of war films, and written off as an inappropriate attempt to glorify war.

The most important reason to focus on the familial unit in postwar films is to “challenge the fascists’ record in claiming exclusive rights to good parenting.”²⁰ Franco epitomizes families like those in *Raza*, or even the family in José Antonio Nieves Conde's film, *Surcos* (1951), which depicts a morally defunct family tormented by their lives in Madrid, only to be reunited by the father figure. Although Franco attempts to portray the family as a means of salvation, in most other films, the family members have a much more disastrous effect on each other.

In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana's family acts as though each person is a completely separate unit. The mother and father are only shown in the same scene once in the entire film, and even more infrequently are they seen interacting with their children. Theirs is a suffocatingly dysfunctional family, due to the lack of communication between the family members. In *Cría cuervos*, Ana believes that she is responsible for the death of her father, Anselmo, because she tried to poison him. She spends the majority of the remainder of the film trying to kill a few more

²⁰ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press, 155.

family members. In addition, the mother figure offers little respite from the stifling patriarchal world of *Cría cuervos*. At the start of the film, Ana's mother, María, has recently died. This maternal void is filled by Aunt Paulina, María's sister. However, Paulina resents the children. She hates that she has the responsibility of caring for them, and that they have effectively trapped her in their same vacuous situation. Although the heroines in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos* were raised by disinterested parents, Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno* is murdered, at the end of the film, in cold blood by her step-father. These three films ridicule the importance of the family that Franco so desperately tried to promote.

It is most interesting when looking at *El laberinto del fauno* that Vidal is the father figure for Franco's typified patriarchal tyranny, yet Vidal is the reason that his entire family dies. Captain Vidal misinterprets the use of the familial nucleus because he tries to preserve only the male line of his family. However, the family only represents the unity of the country when it is preserved in concordance with the females. Mercedes is the best example of this symbiotic relationship between patriarchy and matriarchy. She is the bravest character in the film, as she fiercely protects both her brother and Ofelia. She delicately balances the line between feminine and masculine qualities, which is best represented by the knife she keeps wrapped in the top fold of her apron. It is just a simple paring knife. In most scenes, Mercedes uses the knife to perform her kitchen duties, and in these scenes the knife fits nicely within the confines of femininity. However, in one of the final scenes in the film, Mercedes uses the paring knife to stab Captain Vidal, securing her freedom. This act demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between femininity and masculinity. Captain Vidal blatantly ignores this balance as he surrounds himself with the men of his command, and reprimands Carmen whenever she speaks.

Each of the films focuses on a wealthy family in the aftermath of the war. Ana from *Cría cuervos* and Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno* live with very rich parents. Ofelia's stepfather, Vidal, is in charge of the entire operation to destroy any remaining pockets of rebellion that are hiding in the mountains. Anselmo, Ana's father in *Cría cuervos*, was ranked very highly in the national military. The family lives in an expensive property in the center of Madrid in the 1970s. Vidal and Anselmo represent the immoral political system, as they have earned their wealth by taking it from millions of suffering citizens. When a shipment of supplies comes from Madrid to Vidal's outpost in the north, he sniffs the tobacco, showing his personal investment in oppression. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the family was quite rich before the war, but as Teresa walks through her house and writes her letters, she says that the house has lost much of its splendor. She says that "you would hardly recognize it ... we are just trying to survive."²¹ It is important to the progression of the story that these families are, or were before the war, very wealthy. Tracing the influx of money in each of these families shows how those with money could lose it all if they chose the wrong side, and that previously less wealthy people could buy influence and power in the new order of Spanish politics.

Poverty was a major part of life in the years immediately following the war. There is an excellent scene *El laberinto del fauno* that shows the relationship between the state and the people. While the officers allocate the rations, giving bread to the citizens of this remote outpost in Spain's north, the Lieutenant recites that Franco has given his citizens their "daily bread."²² The scene is essentially an eerie depiction of the Lord's Prayer. Del Toro is obviously juxtaposing the canonical prayer against the sharp poverty, to show how the government still

²¹ Querejeta, E. (Producer), & Erice, V. (Director). (1973). *El espíritu de la colmena* [Motion picture]. Spain: Elías Querejeta Producciones Cinematográficas S.L.

²² Del Toro, G. (Director). (2006). *El laberinto del fauno* [Motion picture]. Mexico: Warner Brothers.

thinks itself to be infallible, even though people are suffering terribly. As Franco bequeaths barely enough food for them to survive, they cling to him. This is an example of Franco's strengthening a macro-level familial bond. The citizens rely on the state, and the state, to some extent, provides. Additionally, this scene positions Franco's regime in the same esteem as the Catholic Church, which suggests that the divide between church and state would further disappear as the regime grew stronger.

Although each of the films follows the story of a rich family, the directors argue that money will not buy security, stability or even happiness. Each member of the family is polarized. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana and her sister spend a great deal of time together, but Teresa and Fernando, the parents, only appear in the same scene once throughout the entire film. As the movie continues, the relationship between Ana and Isabel becomes strained, especially as Ana begins disobeying Isabel. From the beginning of the film, there is a drawing of a mother with her two daughters, this is a visual caricature of the family looking happy. But there is no scene in the film that features Teresa together with her two daughters, and certainly no scene that shows them all to be happy. There are only two scenes in which a parent interacts with Ana and Isabel: when Fernando takes the girls to look for mushrooms (a scene which connects Ana's obsession with death to the world around her), and one scene of the family eating breakfast together (when Fernando realizes that Ana helped the refugee). Other than these two scenes, the viewer can only be sure of their relationships by the interconnected nature of the filmography. Erice overlaps music and speech patterns in many scenes to show how the characters are relating to one another. In addition, he uses abrupt transitions to portray the sharp dissimilarities between family members. In essence, the family members share only a home and certain meal times.

Overlapping music is a feature in *El laberinto del fauno* as well. Mercedes' hummed lullaby connects a few of the scenes. She marks the scenes between the world of Vidal and Ofelia's subterranean paradise. The overlapping speech and music draw connections between the adult and juvenile worlds. Mercedes hums while Ofelia falls asleep, and the camera follows from the dark, cool colors associated with postwar Spain to the warm colors of the subterranean world. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the world is characterized by the colors of the beehive. Therefore, the film is saturated with golden yellows and browns. The use of color in each of these films is an additional layer of caricature. Erice uses his color scheme to entrench the viewer in the sullen, claustrophobic world of his beehive. He uses these colors, especially in conjunction with the polarized family members, to support his idea that the citizens of Franco's Spain are as meaningless to the overall political system as individual bees are to their hive. Ultimately, this idea is transferred to the audience quite well, as most viewers feel quite uncomfortable by the palpable misery exhibited by each of the polarized family members.

This polarization is visible in each of the films, although it is the most concentrated in *El espíritu de la colmena*. In *El laberinto del fauno*, Ofelia's mother, Carmen, has a very difficult pregnancy. She carries out much the same role in parenting as Ana's mother, María, in *Cría cuervos*. Each woman is severely limited by her illness, rendering the father to be primary caretaker. In both films, the patriarch spectacularly fails in his fatherly duties. Vidal kills Ofelia at the end of the movie, and the viewer only meets Anselmo just before his death, which we learn was (supposedly) propelled by Ana. The depiction of the family in each of these films is clearly twisted, to the point that these representations become a caricature of Franco's desired familial relations, because in both *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno* the family members hate each other so much that people die.

In addition to the polarization of members of upper-class families, the family nucleus that Franco relied on so heavily is further mocked through the changing dichotomies of familial relationships. Family members take on different roles in each of the films. In *El laberinto del fauno*, when Carmen dies, Mercedes becomes the only person who cares about Ofelia's well-being. In *Cría cuervos* as well, Ana takes more interest in the maid's affairs and her doll than in her sisters or aunt. It is particularly interesting that Ana hates her mother's sister Paulina, who acts as the girls' guardian after their father dies, because in many scenes, Ana pretends to portray the idealized version of motherhood that Paulina attempts to represent. She plays with her doll, even trying to breastfeed it once. In addition, Ana and her sisters' role-play a skit between a disgruntled housewife and her husband. The idea of "the family" is most severely criticized in *El espíritu de la colmena*, because Ana rebukes any contact with her relatives by the film's end. She is so severely attached to her hallucinations and to the idea of Frankenstein, that she is unable to decipher her familial connections.

Director Victor Erice wrote, "Those who lived [throughout the Civil War] are in a vacuum."²³ To live in a vacuum is Erice's way of saying that everyone is suffering from their own form of PTSD. The characters exhibited in *El laberinto del fauno*, *Cría cuervos* and *El espíritu de la colmena* have almost completely resigned themselves to this type of mental vacancy. The directors, del Toro, Erice and Saura, used the characters in this way to show how exacerbated the familial dilemmas could become. Most citizens throughout the postwar focused on survival and on having enough to eat each day, but everyone was traumatized in some way.

²³ Resina, J.R. (2009). *Burning Darkness: A half century of Spanish Cinema*. New York: State University of New York Press,

The mental vacuum is a hyperbole that describes the way most citizens would engage in daily activities if they had the monetary resources to ensure their survival.

In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the parents exhibit coping mechanisms to deal with their trauma: Teresa writes letters and Fernando observes his bees. Throughout the majority of the film, the viewer sees Fernando and Teresa only in the context of their pastimes. Fernando spends more time tending to his bees than he does with his children— leading him to view his daughters in much the same way as he treats his bees. Fernando is a distanced patriarch; he doesn't control his family, and he only monitors their behavior. Robert Miles writes that “[Fernando] inspects [the sleeping girls] as he inspects his observation hive.”²⁴

In *Cría cuervos*, the senile grandmother is the best representation of a mental vacuum because she does not speak nor interact with any of her family members. The grandmother is the most important character for describing this metaphysical crisis because she would have directly taken part in the war. The grandmother is so consumed by her trauma that she cannot interact with the rest of her family. She just tries to fill her time with pleasant images and music. There is a clear irony in the dichotomy of the relationship between Ana and her grandmother. Ana, a very young girl, takes care of a woman seventy years her senior.

Finally, in *El laberinto del fauno*, Carmen is the character who most clearly exhibits a mental vacancy and an inability to come to terms with her past. Regardless of Carmen's true feelings for Captain Vidal, she suppresses her repulsion and marries him in order to provide a better future for herself and Ofelia. When Carmen and Ofelia arrive at the mill, Vidal confines Carmen to a wheel chair. Shortly after their arrival, Carmen falls very ill from her pregnancy and cannot leave her bed. This illness prohibits her from giving Ofelia any kind of motherly support.

²⁴ Miles, R. (2010). The shadow of Maeterlinck's *La Vie des abeilles* and *El espíritu de la colmena*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 87(8), 996.

This situation is more indicative of a physical vacancy than a mental one, but it can be argued that her trauma led her to make the desperate decision to marry Vidal, entrenching the rest of her life in tangible misery.

The mental vacuum is an important concept when discussing the dichotomy between the family members. In many of the films, the parents had no desire to care for their children. None of the parental figures (other than Mercedes in *El laberinto del fauno*) shows compassion towards their children. Instead, the children are viewed as consequences of the adults' failure to rebuild their lives. Children are supposed to represent a new life, a new beginning. Especially in this phase of Spanish history, the children should have brought a wealth of happiness to the nation under reconstruction. However, the children of *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno* remind their parents primarily that having hope will only lead to disappointment, and perhaps tragedy.

In addition, in *El espíritu de la colmena*, the relationships between adult and child, caregiver and caretaker are reversed when Ana meets the refugee. There is a very telling shot when the camera frames only Ana's hand, as she holds out an apple for the refugee and he holds his hand out to her, pausing before he takes it. There are multiple possible interpretations of this pose. First, it could refer to the importance of Eve's tempting Adam with an apple in the Garden of Eden. The refugee pauses for a moment and looks into Ana's eyes before he takes the apple and eats it. Soon after the refugee eats his "forbidden fruit," he is located by law enforcement and killed. Furthermore, the pose in which Ana holds out the apple in her hand alludes to one of the most iconic poses in painting and film: it portrays Michelangelo's work in the Vatican, titled *Creation of Adam* (D. Kuehl, personal communication, October 2013). God and Adam's fingers almost touch, which shows the physical, almost tangible connection humans can hold with the

Holy Father, but ultimately, it also shows how they fail to achieve his perfection. The pose in *El espíritu de la colmena* reflects this very palpable “father-quest,”²⁵ the desire of children to mimic their parents. In the case of Ana and the refugee, she gives him an apple. The apple becomes a symbol for life— as it nourishes the refugee— and parallels the life-giving depiction in the *Creation of Adam*.

This “father-quest” propels the stories of the other films as well. In *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno*, the search is hyperbolized. In *Cría cuervos*, Ana is motivated by the opposite of a father-quest. She tries to kill him. Ana blames her father, Anselmo, for everything bad that happened to her mother. She resents that he is so disinterested in her life. However, in *El laberinto del fauno*, each character is tormented by his or her feelings about “fatherhood.” Vidal makes it very clear from their first meeting that he does not care for Ofelia. However, from the film’s opening narration, the story is set around Ofelia’s reuniting with her true father— the king of the underworld. It is not Vidal’s fatherhood that characterizes Ofelia; instead, it is the king’s love that she seeks. These distinctions between fatherhood are represented in the final scene, when Vidal shoots and kills Ofelia, allowing her to return to the kingdom of her true father.

Although Ofelia’s father-quest drives the story, Vidal’s relationship with his father completely defines his character. Vidal is the representation of Franco, of course; however, as Vidal struggles to come to terms with the memory of his father, the viewer can see how Vidal “channels his inadequacies into violence.”²⁶ These “inadequacies” stem from his inability to live up to his father’s expectations. Much as in the painting, *Creation of Adam*, Vidal seeks approval from the man who gave him life. In an interview, Guillermo del Toro described the character of

²⁵ Sanchez, F. (2012). A post-national spanish imaginary. A case-study: Pan’s Labyrinth. *The Comparatist* 36, 139.

²⁶ Newman, B. (2007, Jan 12). ‘Labyrinth’ director steps up tackles difficult issues. *Oakland Tribune*.

Vidal as someone who “appears to the outside world to be very secure in himself, very attractive, very strong, but when he’s alone he hates himself.”²⁷ It can be argued that when del Toro created Vidal, he did so with the intention of portraying the inner emotions of Francisco Franco as accurately as he imagined them.

The father-quest is an important feature in *El laberinto del fauno*. Although del Toro plays with the symbol of “fatherhood” in a more obvious manner than Erice or Saura, the same metaphors ring true for the depiction of a father figure in a broken Spain. In *El laberinto del fauno* and *Cría Cuervos*, the father figures of Anselmo and Captain Vidal represent Franco, as their children actively rebel against them. In *Cría cuervos*, Ana’s attempt at murder suggests that in the future there will be vindication for crimes committed during the war. In *El laberinto del fauno*, Ofelia’s interactions with Vidal suggest that although Franco has control of the country, he still doesn’t have control of the people. Ofelia becomes a symbol for the resistance.

Throughout Franco’s entire rule, the resistance never died. The terrorist group, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, or ETA, was formed during the postwar to advance its agenda of promoting the autonomy of the País Vasco.²⁸ There were similar feelings of resentment throughout Cataluña. Throughout the country, and during the entirety of Franco’s rule, there were silent protests against this political father figure. The most incredible feature of the relationship between Franco and his people is that the resistance never truly died. *El laberinto del fauno* takes place in 1944, five years after the war had ended. Yet, when Dr. Ferreiro suggests that Pedro escape with Mercedes across the border, he refuses. Pedro says that he will never give up and never leave Spain.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ What is Eta? (2011, October 20). *BBC News Europe*.

There were always people rebelling. The resistance became more and more secretive as Franco became more ruthless, but there was never a moment that the country simply gave up and surrendered itself whole-heartedly to the dictator. This is why there are still movies being made about a war that happened more than seventy years ago, because there are still different sides to this story, which have yet to be told.

The emphasis on siblings is another departure from the Franco-sponsored nuclear family archetype. The heroines are characterized by their relationships with their siblings. It is these bonds that propel the drama. The lack of any parental attention requires that the relationships among siblings be that much stronger.

In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana and Isabel represent opposing ideologies of the Spanish Civil War. Ana is the rebellious child, depicting the republicans, while Isabel symbolizes the manipulative nationalist party. As the credits roll through the beginning of the film, one of the cartoons shows two sisters. This drawing is a caricature of their relationship, because Ana and Isabel, even from the beginning of the movie, are not very close. They are polar opposites. As the girls lie in their beds the night after watching *Frankenstein*, Ana asks Isabel, “¿Por qué le ha matado?” [“Why did he kill her?”²⁹], referring to the little girl who was killed by Frankenstein’s monster. For a while, Isabel refuses to respond, and when she does, she tells Ana only lies. Eventually, their conversation leads to one of the most important quotes of the film, “Que no puedes matar a una espíritu” [“that you can’t kill a spirit”³⁰]. Soon after Isabel tells her this, Ana

²⁹ Author’s own translation

³⁰ Author’s own translation

expresses, for the first time, her desire to become an eternal spirit, when she says, “Soy Ana” [“I’m Ana”³¹].

Cría cuervos shows the most typical relationships among sisters. Ana, Maite and Irene are orphaned soon after the film begins. Although they are raised together, they are incapable of forging any substantial bonds. Ana is the rebellious child, preferring to spend her time with the grandmother, maid or even her doll, leaving Maite and Irene to create their own attachments. The girls play together frequently, but in these scenes, such as when the viewer first hears the song “Porque te vas,” Ana quickly distances herself from the group.

El laberinto del fauno depicts sibling relationships that are completely symbiotic. There is, of course, the connection between Ofelia and her newborn brother; but the strength yielded from a sibling bond is even more apparent in the relationship between Pedro and Mercedes. Ofelia is only able to reenter her subterranean kingdom because she refuses to sacrifice her brother’s blood. Pedro and Mercedes draw strength from each other as they attempt to undermine, and ultimately kill, Captain Vidal. The importance of siblings is paramount to the characterization of the heroines, because they need someone to interact with. As the parents become more isolated and more emotionally unavailable to their children, the children create their own bonds.

Although the majority of this section has been devoted to discussing the many ways Franco’s nuclear family ideal was hyperbolized, the endings of *El laberinto del fauno* and *El espíritu de la colmena* feature the families’ reconciliation. The reconciliations are the most obvious caricatures throughout the film. However, in the case of *El espíritu de la colmena*, Erice had to portray the family in a positive way in order to avoid censorship. The caricature is most

³¹ Author’s own translation

obvious in this film because it appears so abruptly. After Ana has a mental breakdown and runs away, Teresa decides to focus on her family instead of on her own personal trauma. Teresa brings the family back together again, as she realizes that her role as mother is more important to her than the events of the past. She burns her most recent letter, gets a doctor to see Ana, and makes everyone in the house start acting more like a family.

Cría cuervos is one of the most elusive films in Spanish history. It is famous partly because it does not have a single, profound message, but rather it has many, allowing viewers to take away whatever themes they relate to the most. The movie offers very little reconciliation. Paulina does not die, even though Ana tried to poison her. The girls begin their new year in school. Ultimately, the film is about Ana's dealing with the loss of both her parents during summer vacation, and how, even after so much death, life continues. However, this is the only conclusion a viewer can draw from the movie: that life goes on. There is no familial reconciliation, and Ana is shown to be just as distanced from her sisters as she was at the film's beginning.

El laberinto del fauno has the most fairytale-like ending of any of these films. The movie ends with Ofelia's dying at the hands of her stepfather, Captain Vidal, only to be reunited with her true father, the King of the subterranean world. In addition, her mother, Carmen, who died giving birth to her brother, is seated in the magical realm next to her father. The family in this film is completely reunited. This family lives happily ever after, but they achieve their happy ending only in a fantasy world outside of oppressive Spain.

The idea of family is highly important to each of these films, as well as to Franco's overall goals for Spain. The family is the central nucleus of political power. Therefore, political allegories lie within the depictions of the family. Caricatures are important features when

discussing the familial model of Franco's Spain, because they allow the viewer to extend the metaphor of the family beyond the walls of the home and into the greater Spanish nation. In an interview, Carlos Saura said, "Children are nothing more than the projections and reflections of their parents."³² If this statement is true, or at least, if this is the ideal that Saura is portraying through his film, *Cría cuervos*, then it is effectively Ana's fate to become as empty a vessel as her grandmother, or as miserable as her mother. Both of these women refuse to acknowledge their pasts. The grandmother is too pained by the knowledge of history, and María, Ana's mother, is hurt by the unfulfilled promises that her future held before she married Anselmo. If viewers take only *Cría cuervos* and the words of Carlos Saura as models for what lies ahead, then they can assume that Spain's future will be very bleak.

³² Carlos Saura In. Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press.

Chapter 4: Memory

Memory is a particularly difficult concept to portray in Spanish film. Today, younger generations have the resources to find out what happened during an incredibly bleak time in Spanish history. For more than four decades, the Franco regime enforced silence through a means of terror “to achieve a political goal,”³³ which was only reinforced in 1975, when both left and right wing parties decided to enact an official Pact of Forgetting. This piece of legislation gave blanket amnesty to anyone who had perpetrated human rights violations.³⁴ The law was enacted to force both sides to move beyond the atrocities of the Franco regime, in order to build a more sustainable system of governance, one which could provide for a future, democratic Spain. The films *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973) and *Cría cuervos* (1976) were both made under this specific atmosphere of ambiguity. Both films also focus on the effects of a tainted memory. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, although the film is set in 1940, immediately following the end of the war, the family has already felt the pressure to forget its republican affiliations. As the family notices that it has lost an important part of its identity, each of its members subsequently begins to fall into his or her own type of memory lapse. This memory lapse will be discussed further later in this section. In *Cría cuervos*, the film is highly conscious of its precarious timing. Between Franco’s death in 1975 until the institution of the parliamentary monarchy in 1978, the country was, once again, caught in a desperate limbo between its republican tendencies and nationalist allegiances (D. Kuehl, personal communication, October 2013). Therefore, the film is very careful to avoid foreshadowing the future. *Cría cuervos* is essentially a film about how its

³³ Sanchez, F. (2012). A post-national spanish imaginary. A case-study: Pan’s Labyrinth. *The Comparatist* 36, 139.

³⁴ Poggioli, S. (2010, August 4). In Spain, A Crusading Judge Opens Old Wounds. *NPR*.

characters' pasts have affected their development in the present. The film does not comment on a system of governance, nor does it in any way mention the future. The characters in *Cría cuervos* are suspended in time.

Although memory is a particularly important theme in terms of Spanish history and the Franco regime in the two aforementioned films, it is also a central idea in del Toro's film, *El laberinto del fauno*. In this film, the concept of a lost memory permeates the entire plot, as Princess Moana attempts to regain entry into her magical realm.

In each of the films, the motif of memory is utilized to showcase a mental vacancy. As very few characters are willing to take responsibility for their pasts, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to hold onto the "truths" which invariably exist in their memories. This lack of memory creates a void in which the characters' internal conflicts reside. The most apparent example of this mental vacancy is exhibited by Ana's grandmother in *Cría cuervos*, as she uses photographs to circumvent her dissatisfaction with life.

The recent documentary, *La Maleta Mexicana*, attempts to describe the vibrant relationship between memories and photographs. Although we do not typically think of photographs as manifestation of our memories, often it is easier to remember the context of a photograph and work backwards from there, than to actually remember the events (K. Everly, personal communication, October 2014). In other words, to a large degree, our memories are undeniably linked to their tangible representations in photographs. The director of the film, Trisha Ziff, interconnects the importance of three seemingly distinct plot lines to showcase the relationships among our memories, our actions and our pictures. The first plot line, and the one that captures the film's title, follows the trajectory of the Mexican Suitcase. This "suitcase" is actually a series of three cardboard boxes that held thousands of photo negatives from

photographers Gerda Taro, Robert Capa and David “Chim” Seymour. The second plot line shows archeologists exhuming what they believe to be a mass grave from the Civil War; and the third features people who tried to escape from Spain, as well as many who succeeded. Without ever explicitly saying it, Ziff weaves the plots together in a way that forces the viewer to focus on the similarities in each plot line, as opposed to the differences. The structure of this film exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between photography and history.

As the film suggests by its mere existence, today’s generation of Spaniards have become much more curious. Only recently, after the institution of *La ley de memoria*,³⁵ has there been a governmentally sanctioned interest in recovering secrets from the Franco era. Because this movement is spearheaded by people who are removed from the Civil War by at least one generation,³⁶ it is forcing older Spaniards to embrace their past in a way that was previously prohibited. We can see in films from earlier periods that feeling systemized pressure to ignore the past was a traumatizing experience. However, that is exactly the conflict presented in the films *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno*.

As younger generations move towards a policy of remembering, they become part of the Spanish “collective memory.” The collective memory is an ideological subscription to recounting past events. It follows from the idea that every person is a part of history, and therefore our knowledge of the past and how we interpret our memories are contingent on the people who lived before us.³⁷ The concept of a collective memory is of paramount importance when attempting to evaluate the impact of the Spanish Civil War and the magnitude of its damage. Each of the films has its own method of exemplifying the importance of a collective

³⁵ Abend, L. (2008, October 17). At Last, Spain Faces Up to Franco’s Guilt. *Time Magazine*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Ramos, Y.G. (2011). El acto colectivo de recordar: historia y fantasía en *El espíritu de la colmena* y *El laberinto del fauno*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 3, 179-196.

memory. In most cases, the collective memory is preserved in photographs and books. However, there is a more subtle perversion of our memories that pervades the films: how the characters feel about one another and how they feel about themselves in the present.

As mentioned briefly in the introduction, the young heroines in each film are forced to deal with their own forms of post-traumatic stress disorder as they become marginalized within their homes (D. Kuehl, personal communication, October 2013). This type of PTSD is specific to children as they are faced with an inherent double standard of feeling the aftershock of war without having had a role in its inception (A. Mendez, personal communication, September 2014).

There is a palpable difference between adults and children as they try to move on from the atrocities of war. The quote from the introduction (“adults blindly accept conflict while children can’t fathom the causes”³⁸) describes the difficult relationship that children have with what is going on around them. The tragedies of war resonate differently with children than they do with adults. Adults are guilty of perpetrating war crimes, but children feel the guilt. The atrocities of war, especially in the case of the Spanish Civil War, only become more profound until someone is held accountable. Spaniards today, and the children of Spanish refugees, are still accumulating the responsibility to account for the destruction of the Civil War.

This chapter relates to the seemingly obscure methods of incorporating caricatures into the films. More than anything, the caricatures relate to the way that we feel when we watch *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno*. The films exude a sentiment that “grotesquely” distorts³⁹ the intentions of film under the Franco regime. The themes of a national

³⁸ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press.

³⁹ Caricature (n.d.) In *Oxford English Dictionary online*.

collective memory and childhood PTSD are the vectors through which the audience sees each heroine struggle with her place in society; therefore, the domain of memory is one of the most valuable mediums for caricatures.

Alberto Mira wrote that, currently, the period of the Spanish Civil War and its postwar era are characterized by a “historical and political blackout.”⁴⁰ This blank space in history is pervasive today, as so much remains unknown about the events of the past.

There is an important difference between individual memory and the act of collectively remembering. Yvonne Gavela Ramos wrote that “la memoria [es] algo estático que poseemos, [pero] del acto de recordar [es] una actividad que emprendemos a través de la mediación de diversas narrativas.”⁴¹ (“The memory [is] something static that we possess, [however] the act of remembering [is] an activity that we learn through mediation of diverse narratives”⁴²). She so poignantly notes that our individual memories may not change, but the collective memory, for example, the collective memory of a nation, is always changing. Spain is the perfect example of a nation whose collective memory is always changing.

In *Cría cuervos*, Geraldine Chaplin plays Ana’s mother, but she is also the actress portraying Ana twenty years into the future. This shows how different generations, within the same family even, are differently affected by conflict. In addition, using Geraldine Chaplin proves that these future generations are always affected. The grandmother in *Cría cuervos* also displays the dichotomy between her static individual memory and the amorphous collective memory. At first glance, the grandmother seems to be completely senile. She lacks the capability

⁴⁰ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press.

⁴¹ Ramos, Y.G. (2011). El acto colectivo de recordar: historia y fantasía en *El espíritu de la colmena* y *El laberinto del fauno*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 3, 182. doi: 10.3828/bhs.2011.3

⁴² Author’s own translation

to express herself in any way. It is clear that the trauma of her past has led her to ostracize the painful memories as she attempts to hold onto only the good memories.

Photographs are the point of contact between the grandmother's happy memories and her remaining sanity. She uses the photos to try to give meaning to her life. It can be inferred that the grandmother has chosen to forget her past. Therefore, she uses the photographs and the stories associated with these images to pretend that she lived a happy life. The relationship between Ana and her grandmother is characterized almost exclusively through the medium of these pictures. In multiple scenes of the film, Ana sits with her grandmother, puts on Argentinian music, and stares at a collection of pictures of people Ana has never met, as they lived their lives happily in faraway places.

Through Ana's relationship with her grandmother, the viewer can see that Ana will not be satisfied with her static life, just as the grandmother is clearly unhappy with her own. In addition, the parallels in the relationship between Ana and her grandmother let the audience understand that Ana will need to use pictures and their stories in order to give her own life meaning. It is clear that photographs hold an unequivocal importance to the film, as the opening credits revolve around these images, and Ana is frequently situated in scenes with scrapbooks and photographs. She tries to live vicariously through the happy portrayals of her family members.

This is essentially the most important aspect of the collective memory. And this example is given in terms of a more micro-conceptualization of collective memory. In regard to her family, Ana uses the images and stories of her relatives to prove to herself that it is possible to find love within a family. In addition, the photos act as a referent between multiple generations, as Ana uses images to interact and communicate with her otherwise senile grandmother.

Photographs are such an important symbol in the film because they act as a tangible representation of a memory. Although the family members in *Cría cuervos* try not to think about the war, they are frequently reminded of their pasts in a much different forum: through scrapbooks, pictures, and stories of far-away relatives.

On a macro-scale, collective memory is an important tool in government. As discussed in *Cría cuervos*, photographs and images can be used to act as a bridge between the past and the present. In addition, they incite discussions of history. Laws such as *La ley de memoria*, which was passed in 2007, incite discussions⁴³ that can enrich a historical narrative. A nation's collective memory is only vibrant and complete to the extent that its citizens are willing to discuss it. Therefore, Spain is only beginning to understand its collective memory.

Although *Cría cuervos* has the most substantial connection between photos and representations of a macro or micro collective memory, the other films similarly demonstrate a need to capture memories in a tangible forum. In much the same way that photos are used in *Cría cuervos*, books are used in the other two films. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Fernando documents his interactions with the bees in an attempt to show the similarities between a beehive and Spanish citizens under the Franco regime. Fernando focuses his dissatisfaction with the regime in a constructive way that directly compares the organizational properties of a beehive with the regime. Miles writes that there is a “fundamental sadness of the empty hive.”⁴⁴ Therefore, Fernando's writings act as a referent for his feelings about the regime. In lieu of his being able to outwardly express his disappointment, Fernando masks his concern in his discussion of bees.

⁴³ Abend, L. (2008, October 17). At Last, Spain Faces Up to Franco's Guilt. *Time Magazine*.

⁴⁴ Miles, R. (2010). The shadow of Maeterlinck's *La Vie des abeilles* and *El espíritu de la colmena*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 87(8), 967.

In *El laberinto del fauno*, Ofelia uses her books as a means of personal continuity. From the opening scene in the film, the narrator poses the entire story as if it were a fairy tale. In addition, the audience first meets Ofelia as she is riding in a carriage with her mother, reading from a book of stories. When Ofelia moves into the old mill under Captain Vidal's protection, she uses her connection with these books to mentally tether her to this place. In other words, Ofelia is an exile in her own country. Ofelia, under Captain Vidal's oppressive approach to parenting, is marginalized in her own home. She feels like an outcast. Therefore, she regards her storybooks as a symbol of her past desires and her past life as Princess Moana. These fairy tales are a symbol of Ofelia's individual memory.

As the narrator begins the film, he tells the audience that Princess Moana has no memory of her time in the Underworld. The parallels between the fairy tales by which Ofelia is constantly characterized and her true existence as the princess of a magical realm provoke the idea that these books are, in fact, manifestations of some of Ofelia's memories.

The final theme of an amorphous memory lies in the analysis of each protagonist's interaction with people suffering from PTSD. As Yvonne Gavela Ramos wrote, the act of collectively remembering is critical after such traumatizing events. She describes the relationship between memory and the female protagonists in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *El laberinto del fauno* as follows: “[La posguerra era] una época de miseria, inmovilismo, y aislamiento, cuya única salida es el vuelo imaginaria”⁴⁵ (“[The postwar was] an age of misery, immobility, and isolation, from which the only exit is an imaginary flight”⁴⁶). As the text suggests, an “imaginary flight” is the only escape from the overwhelming sadness of the decrepit home. Each heroine

⁴⁵ Ramos, Y.G. (2011). El acto colectivo de recordar: historia y fantasía en *El espíritu de la colmena* y *El laberinto del fauno*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 3, 188.

⁴⁶ Author's own translation

suffers immensely from this type of PTSD, and in each case, the heroines self-segregate. Ana in *Cría cuervos* hallucinates the image of her mother and frequently confuses reality with history. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the film *Frankenstein* is the nucleus of symbolism for post-traumatic stress disorder. In the few opening scenes of the film, each family member walks by the movie house. Ana and Isabel are watching the movie, but Fernando takes a stroll into town and passes the school gymnasium; Teresa rides by on her bicycle as she delivers her letter to the train.

The camera is set up in such a way as to reinforce the suggestion that *Frankenstein* is the center of all the film's symbolism. When the movie begins, and the viewer first sees the sign reading "Hoyelous 1940," the next shot cuts to a decrepit schoolhouse building. Erice's use of a wide establishing shot evokes the feeling that something very important is about to happen in this school gym. Furthermore, each time an additional family member walks by the schoolhouse, Erice sets up the camera in essentially the same way. He begins by setting the scene in a wide shot and, in the cases of Fernando and Teresa, he simply lets them walk in and out of the static imagery as they continue about their days. It is a lengthy process, letting characters walk in and walk of a scene, but the timing, as well as the cinematography, further the silent desperation that each character is palpably evoking.

Frankenstein, in this film, is a metaphor for PTSD. Although each character has been dealing with the effects of unfathomable trauma since the Civil War began in 1936, *Frankenstein* starts the process of PTSD in the film. Finally, in *El laberinto del fauno*, Ofelia is the least affected by a form of PTSD. This is most likely due to the fact that she, according to the faun-narrator, is instead suffering from amnesia.

Caricatures are less obvious in this discussion of memory. However, there is an obvious subversive tactic being used by each director. The variations in how each heroine handles her PTSD are elusive enough to have evaded the censor of the mid-1970s. In *Cría cuervos*, Ana's hallucinations are so confusing that they can be difficult to interpret. This is a form of Saura's use of a caricature. He morphs the commonplace ideology that caricatures need to be manifestations of something. Instead, it is exponentially more popular in the films of Carlos Saura, Victor Erice and, at times, Guillermo del Toro, to subtly mock the regime. *Cría cuervos* and *El espíritu de la colmena* overtly criticize the office of censorship, as both films are incredibly politically charged; yet the government approved both.

Children were affected by PTSD in many of the same ways as adults in the postwar period. However, the trauma experienced by this generation of Spaniards only marks the beginning of the nation's inability to face its national collective memory. Ultimately, as children grew up in a country with an uncertain future, they began to evaluate their own memories differently. We can see in *El espíritu de la colmena* that Ana tries to manipulate her own memories so much that she convinces herself that she is a monster. In *Cría cuervos*, Ana learns from her grandmother to safeguard memories in physical ways—in a scrapbook or in photographs taped to a mirror—and to transmit these memories through storytelling. Finally, Ofelia is saved from suffering this type of mental anguish only because she lost all of her memories when she became mortal.

Memory is one of the most weighted subjects in Spanish history. There are some people who want to remember everything, who want to excavate mass graves, and who want the war crimes exposed and the family members of war criminals to pay for the atrocities committed in the past. However, there will always also be people who vehemently support the theory that the

past should remain in the past. Although, technically, this position correctly identifies the conundrum that there is nothing we can do to fix history, it is important to recognize that covering up wounds does not allow them to heal; it only makes them fester and eventually scar.

Chapter 5: Monstrosity

Thus far, these chapters have discussed caricatures in the three themes paramount to the Franco dictatorship: Home, Family, and Memory. The caricatures, which were discussed at length, show how each of the directors formed very thoughtful parallels between characters and allusions to the immoral political system. All the themes previously expanded upon are features of everyday life. However, this section will focus on how the plots in each film were additionally centered on a theme of the *intangible*: myth, monstrosity and metamorphosis.

The heroines' imaginations expand from their beliefs in something undefined. In *El laberinto del fauno*, Ofelia profoundly believes in her fairy tales and in the magical book that the Faun gives her to guide her through her three tests. In *Cría cuervos*, the director cuts the timeline of the film to make it seem as if Ana is hallucinating images of her mother and to show how these hallucinations adversely affect her. Finally, in *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana is so traumatized by the image of *Frankenstein* and the postwar mental vacuum that she hallucinates her own monstrosity and tries to morph her spirit with the ghost of Frankenstein, almost killing herself in the process.

The primary argument of the following sections is that each heroine is abused for her imaginative powers and her faith in the unexplainable, yet each of them is affected more by her own imagination than by the events of real life. This prompts the question of how much reality actually matters when we whole-heartedly believe in the events of our imaginations. If we revisit the ideas in the previous section about memory, there is a distinct parallel between how we construct our memories and how we define ourselves. As Yvonne Gavela Ramos states, “The

narrative mode for construing reality' is central to being human."⁴⁷ The distinction between reality and fiction is enforced by the adult characters. However, the directors' choice to focus on the heroines allows the viewer to believe as the young protagonists do.

Much in the same way that the caricatures of the Franco-inspired family revealed important political allegories, the theme of monstrosity allowed the directors to more explicitly compare the atrocities of the regime to the events of the films. In addition to the physical monsters, which characterize most of *El laberinto del fauno*, there are internal factors tormenting each of the heroines. Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena* is haunted by the spirit of Frankenstein's monster; Ana in *Cría cuervos* is incapable of differentiating timelines and hallucinates images of her mother; and finally, Ofelia is exiled in her own home under Captain Vidal and marginalized by his fascist rule.

The extreme emotional duress from which each of these heroines suffers leads them to question the difference between reality and their own imaginations. In each case, the heroine chooses to follow the world she has created for herself. In Ofelia's case, this choice costs her her mortal life, allowing her to return to the magical subterranean kingdom. Although the intangible monsters—the demons created by each of the heroines—are similarly destructive to the psyches of the protagonists, the “real” monsters are just as dangerous.

El laberinto del fauno is filled with these types of monsters. We originally meet the Faun, “a hefty creature of the woods”⁴⁸ that guides Ofelia throughout the three tasks she must perform before she can return to her subterranean kingdom. There is an irony in del Toro's play on the descent into the underground world and the mythological descent into Hell down the River Styx.

⁴⁷ Wertsch In Ramos, Y.G. (2011). El acto colectivo de recordar: historia y fantasía en *El espíritu de la colmena* y *El laberinto del fauno*. *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 3, 181.

⁴⁸ Del Toro In. Newman, B. (2007, Jan 12). 'Labyrinth' director steps up tackles difficult issues. *Oakland Tribune*.

Del Toro is clearly playing with the hierarchal relationship between Heaven, Earth and Hell, as he places the magical, heavenly realm underneath the Hell-on-earth that characterizes Vidal's region of Spain. By forcing Ofelia to descend into her heaven, del Toro is suggesting that our own versions of paradise can be found in the most unlikely locations.

The Faun in *El laberinto del fauno* is an ode to the original Grimm Brother's fairy tale characters. As del Toro writes, "I felt that that component, which is incredibly sad and powerful, was missing from fairy tale movies."⁴⁹ Therefore, he created a world of similar fairy tale creatures, such as pixie-like creatures that are reminiscent of Tinkerbell in *Peter Pan*,⁵⁰ and Ofelia's costuming, which creates strong parallels between Ofelia and Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*.⁵¹ Although del Toro retained these features from children's movies, *El laberinto del fauno* is tangentially a film debunking the notion that fairy tales have perfect, happy endings. Although Ofelia returns to her father's kingdom when she dies, her brother is left in the mortal world with Mercedes and Pedro as they attempt to defend the Spanish republic, a feat that is destined to fail.

The monsters in *El laberinto del fauno* unnerve the audience, as each of the magical creatures encountered in the film is "grimier, nastier and somewhat crazier"⁵² than what previous fairy tales have suggested. However, the audience expects monsters to be scary. The terrifying parts of the movie, and the reason *El laberinto del fauno* received its "R" rating, are due

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Geronimi, C. (Director), Jackson, W. (Director), & Luske, H. (Director). (1953). *Peter Pan* [Motion Picture]. United States: Walt Disney Productions.

⁵¹ Geronimi, C. (Director), Jackson, W. (Director), & Luske, H. (Director). (1951). *Alice in Wonderland* [Motion Picture]. United States: Walt Disney Productions.

⁵² Del Toro In. Newman, B. (2007, Jan 12). 'Labyrinth' director steps up tackles difficult issues. *Oakland Tribune*.

primarily to the fact that the humans are so violent.⁵³ The dichotomy between the peaceful monster-ridden subterranean realm and the violent Spanish world of 1944 “aporta una clara indicación de quiénes son y dónde se encuentran los verdaderos monstruos, los humanos”⁵⁴ [“supports a clear indication of who they are and where one can find the true monsters, the humans”⁵⁵].

The true monster in this film is Captain Vidal. This feature is revealed in one of the final scenes, when Vidal discovers that Mercedes is the spy for the rebel encampment. She cuts herself free from her restraints with the kitchen knife she keeps folded in her apron and stabs Vidal in the back as he looks over his instruments of torture. As he turns around, Mercedes then stabs Vidal in the face, starting at his mouth and cutting through his cheek. The result is terrifying, as Vidal is left with a permanently exaggerated half-smile. His character becomes most unnerving when he then stitches his cheek back together himself, because he has already shot and killed his physician.

Del Toro uses caricatures in this film to portray the stark contrast between monsters and men. When we, the audience, first meet the Faun we fear him. Eventually, however, we learn to appreciate the sometimes amoral creature of the woods.⁵⁶ The real terrors of the film come from Captain Vidal and his monstrous representation, the Pale Man. The Pale Man is most terrifying when he eats the heads of the fairies. It is a scene which reminds the audience of Vidal’s senseless killing of the rabbit hunter and his son in the beginning of the film. Both monsters are

⁵³Newman, B. (2007, Jan 12). ‘Labyrinth’ director steps up tackles difficult issues. *Oakland Tribune*.

⁵⁴Pastor, B. (2011). La bella y la bestia en el cine laberíntico de Guillermo del Toro: *El espinazo del Diablo* (2001) y *El laberinto del fauno* (2006). *Arbor Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 187, 395.

⁵⁵ Author’s Own translation

⁵⁶ Edwards, K. (2008). Alice’s little sister: Exploring “Pan’s Labyrinth.” *Screen Education* 49, 143.

defined by their needlessly brutal actions, but the juxtaposition of these scenes forces the audience to reconsider how to define a “monster.”

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In conclusion, the caricatures in each of the films *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno* force the audience to feel the atrocities of the Franco regime. Directors Erice, Saura and del Toro subtly infuse their films with these allusions to the horrors of living under the regime by exposing the paradoxes that lie within the sacrosanct aspects of Franco's rule in Spain.

These paradoxes include the representation of the home, family and memory. Although a home is supposed to be a place of sanctuary, it becomes a prison for each of the heroines as they try to navigate the rigid confines of what is accepted in Franco's Spain. The concept of a traditional family is endlessly scrutinized in the films. Each family is fundamentally broken in some way, a feature that extends to the patriarchal structure of the Fascist dictatorship. Finally, our memories are questioned as each director forces his audience to ask the question, "How well does my memory reflect the true events of the past?" and "How do these events affect me today?"

One of the most important, and simultaneously subtle, political allegories in each of the films lies in the home. Each of the young protagonists lives with moderate to extreme wealth. In a time retrospectively known as the "hungry years" in Spain, we find that while both *El espíritu de la colmena* and *El laberinto del fauno* are set during this period, none of the main characters is hungry. Unlike Italian neorealism, which showcases the lives of the impoverished, these classic Spanish films revolve around characters who are likewise trying to survive, even though they have more than enough to eat at all times.

Although the heroines live in large homes, they sometimes suffer in more poignant ways than the children of Italian Neorealism. The chalets of *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos*

and *El laberinto del fauno* are more reminiscent of prisons than comfortable homes. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the gloomy browns and honey-drawn yellows of the house make the entire space seem very gothic. The entire film *Cría cuervos*, except for one scene, takes place in the house. Although the house is very large, the use of that location makes the entire film feel very claustrophobic. Finally, in *El laberinto del fauno*, space is used to contrast the horrors of Vidal's encampment with the outlandish and dangerous tasks Ofelia must perform to prove herself worthy of reentry into the subterranean magical realm.

The second theme of paramount importance for Fascism is the focus on a traditional family. From a macro perspective, the regime was centered on one figure, Francisco Franco. On the individual level, Fascism promoted a patriarchal society, under which there was a mandate to preserve the traditional family. The regime promoted families who subscribed to this societal construction and condemned those who did not. In the films, each heroine is born into a traditional version of a family. However, as the plots progress, we discover that the directors have contorted this definition of a traditional family to show how dysfunctional these relationships can be, and at times, how dangerous they can be for the family members. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana is ostracized by her sister and forgotten by her parents. This relationship fits the pattern of a typical fascist family because the members act independently of one another, thus skewing the power dynamic between the patriarch, Fernando, and his family.

In *Cría cuervos*, Ana's family was never perfect, but the young heroine did love her mother, María. However, María dies before the movie begins. Forced to live under a father she loathes, Ana plots to kill him. Finally, in *El laberinto del fauno*, the family patriarch, Captain Vidal, murders Ofelia at the end of the film, after sacrificing his wife's life in childbirth. In doing this, "del Toro suggests that this fantasy of pure male filiation without the intercession of

women, is fundamental to Fascism.”⁵⁷ This is one of the most obtrusive flaws in Franco’s shared symbolism of the head of a family and the head of state. In a family, there must be a patriarch and a matriarch in order for that family line to survive. This is essentially Franco’s primary downfall as a tyrannical dictator: his heir did not wish to continue his fascist regime. King Juan Carlos, instead, helped to usher in the parliamentary monarchy which currently governs Spain.⁵⁸ Without a successor, Fascist rule in Spain died in 1975 with Franco. He failed to understand that a patriarch needs a matriarch—that the head of a family cannot be only the father figure, but needs to share the leading role with a woman to some extent, in order to continue the family legacy.

Next, the films focus on the importance of memory. This is a particularly sensitive issue in Spain, as the Franco regime systematically made the act of remembering impossible—Franco terrified his citizens to keep them from talking about what had happened. After his death, the newly formed parliamentary monarchy passed *El pacto de silencio*, a piece of legislation that further prohibited speech. Only now, more than forty years later, have there been initial pushes to study the past in an attempt to understand what really happened in the 1930s and ‘40s. However, there are relatively few first-hand accounts about the events in the years 1936-1945. The Spanish Civil War may have ended in 1939, but the executions continued well into the 1940s. In the immediate postwar years, the Franco regime killed as many as 100,000 presumed enemies of the state.⁵⁹ By creating a state of terror, Franco ensured that no citizen could speak against his regime. This created a “historical blackout”⁶⁰ over those years of particularly heightened fear.

⁵⁷ Smith, P. J. (2007). Pan’s Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno). *Film Quarterly* 60(4), 6.

⁵⁸ Sanchez, F. (2012). A post-national spanish imaginary. A case-study: Pan’s Labyrinth. *The Comparatist* 36, 141.

⁵⁹ Abend, L. (2008, October 17). At Last, Spain Faces Up to Franco’s Guilt. *Time Magazine*.

⁶⁰ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press.

In the films, *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos*, the heroines are personally affected by their innate inability to understand the past, discuss it, or even label the source of their trauma. Like the adults in the two aforementioned films, who are severely traumatized by the atrocities of the Civil War, the heroines are similarly affected. Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena* internalizes her stress after watching the film, *Frankenstein*, because the movie scares her. She cannot understand why the monster killed the young girl, and this fear traumatizes her.

In *Cría cuervos*, Ana sits with her senile grandmother to look at photographs. This relationship foreshadows Ana's own destiny. She will be forced to use images as a referent for her past, especially when she tries to find happy memories from her childhood. In the film, Geraldine Chaplin (in the role of as Ana, twenty years in the future) tells the camera that her childhood was not a happy one.⁶¹ Instead of real memories, as a place to seek peace, the photos taken with her mother during the film's opening credits become the only place where she is able to identify a happy time in her life.

The film, *El laberinto del fauno*, places a different emphasis on the concept of memory. Because Ofelia has forgotten her true identity as Princess Moana of the Underworld, her obsession with fairy tale books is her bridge to the past, as she tries to fit into a world of mortals in 1944 Spain.

In all of the films, *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno*, the heroines naturally gravitate to storing their most precious memories and fears in a tangible object. This pattern is repeated throughout history, as so many Spaniards of previous generations have learned that the manifestations of their memories are the only record of the past that is available to document this particularly bleak era in Spanish history.

⁶¹ Querejeta, E. (Producer), & Saura, C. (Director). (1976). *Cría cuervos* [Motion picture]. Spain: Elías Querejeta Producciones Cinematográficas S.L.

Generational interplay is an essential theme in the films, and their overall applicability to Spanish history. This theme is exacerbated by each director's choice to focus his film on a young female protagonist. By centering the plot on very young girls, Erice, Saura and del Toro were able to hyperbolize the similarities between each generation's traumas. For example, the grandmother in *Cría cuervos* is senile; she cannot even speak with her grandchildren, although she can communicate in other ways. The three girls, Ana, Maite and Irene, are quite effervescent in comparison. Maite and Irene symbolize the generation of people in 1975, who simply wanted to forget the past in an attempt to build a better future. Ana, on the other hand, represents the large number of people who were only further ostracized by the post-Franco government as they were, once again, being systematically silenced. Ana in *Cría cuervos* demonstrates the harmful effects of anxiety, stress and trauma.

The parents, Fernando and Teresa in *El espíritu de la colmena* are very isolated; they shut themselves into their private offices throughout the majority of the film. They are excellent examples of the paradoxical relationship between Spain's outward history of repression versus their own "internalized stories."⁶² Their selfish reservations force Ana to rely heavily on her older sister, Isabel. However, Isabel is a symbol of the newly formed Fascist government of 1940. This creates a new dimension of tensions as manipulative Isabel terrorizes rebel-like Ana.

These clearly defined attributes in the different generations force viewers to reexamine the events of the Spanish Civil War. The war may have ended in 1939, but when did the postwar end? Under Franco's rule, the decades between 1940 and 1975 marked different phases in his tyranny. For example, the majority of Franco's rule marked a period of "abject poverty and

⁶² Resina, J.R. (2009). *Burning Darkness: A half century of Spanish Cinema*. New York: State University of New York Press, 65.

terror,”⁶³ but there is no year— or decade— considered to be the end point of the postwar. It can be argued that the postwar ended in 1975, only after Franco’s death and with the commencement of the parliamentary monarchy in 1978. As there is no widely accepted date marking the end of the postwar period, Spain is, yet again, clouded in an ambiguous history. As Barry Spector writes, “Because [the Spanish Civil War] ended so long ago, *yet still within living memory*, it retains a mystique bordering on the mythic.”⁶⁴

There is an important connection to make when analyzing these films: they are all very interconnected. It is apparent that Victor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena*, from 1973, profoundly inspired both directors Carlos Saura and Guillermo del Toro. The most enlightening parallel between the films *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos* is that these films act as bookends (D. Kuehl, personal communication, October 2013). The former depicts Spain in 1940, whereas the latter is set in 1975. A primary argument to support this claim is Saura’s use of Ana Torrent. A highly talented and very young actress, Torrent made the films *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos* in rapid succession. By using these two films to frame the Fascist regime, the viewer is allowed to make direct comparisons between the time periods. Although the use of Ana Torrent is the most obvious example of connections between two of these films, *El laberinto del fauno* similarly alludes to scenes from *El espíritu de la colmena*.

The film cover for *El laberinto del fauno* is an image of Ofelia under a tree, which marks her entrance into the labyrinth. This is remarkably similar to the final shot we see in *El espíritu de la colmena*, where Ana is facing out from a large window in her home, looking into the night, and repeating the words “Soy Ana” [“I am Ana”]. This comparison, which may seem superficial

⁶³ Spector, B. (2009). Sacrifice of the children in *Pan’s Labyrinth* [Review of the film, *El laberinto del fauno*]. *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 3(3), 85.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 84.

at first, instead evokes powerful similarities between the two heroines, and it forces any viewers of *El laberinto del fauno* who are familiar with Erice's work to question whether or not the events in Ofelia's life actually happened— or were they also just a hallucination? The representations of the two images are much too similar to be accidental. Ofelia is draped in the shadow of the night as the enormous tree dwarfs her, much as Ana is encompassed by the darkness and vastness of her window. The saturated blues of this cover evoke feelings like those from the final scene in *El espíritu de la colmena*— in which the audience understands that although the spirits of both these girls live on, their youthful innocence is most certainly dead.

Each of the heroines loses her innocence throughout the film. The stories begin by showing essentially childish moments. Ana and Isabel go to a movie; Ana and her sisters are recovering from their mother's death; and Ofelia hides her insecurities by reading fairy tales. These perfectly normal activities quickly become the catalyst for each girl's trauma. Driven by an innate curiosity, the three protagonists succumb to the horrific aspects of each of these activities. The film *Frankenstein* haunts Ana. María's death in *Cría cuervos* is the last opportunity for her daughter, Ana, to find happiness in childhood, and Ofelia dies at the hand of her stepfather because she refuses to relinquish her brother.

Death is an interesting theme in each of the films because it is one element that people can still control for themselves. Death offered, in many cases, a freedom from oppression that could not be found by any other remedy. In the case of *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana makes an interesting observation that it is impossible to kill a spirit, and it is impossible to kill a ghost. However, she fails to realize that it *is* possible to traumatize a spirit. Thus begins Ana's descent into PTSD. The film ends with Ana's seeking medical support, but the spirit has still poignantly impacted her.

In *Cría cuervos*, a film plagued with death, Ana is the most obvious example of a heroine who loses her innocence. She blames her father for her mother's death and tries to poison him with baking soda, which her mother had jokingly told her is a deadly toxin. Thinking that she has succeeded, Ana proceeds to try to poison her aunt Paulina and her grandmother. Ana is characterized by death. In addition to her mother and father's deaths, her pet hamster dies; and Ana plays a game with her sisters that involves her killing them as they hide behind trees.

One of the most profound messages that Saura puts into his film comes in the final scene. As the girls walk to school on their first day after summer vacation, the credits run, and Ana, Maite and Irene walk in succession with all their similarly dressed classmates. It becomes more and more difficult to tell Ana, the film's young murderer, apart from her similarly-dressed classmates. This scene is significant because it sets an interesting precedent for the next generation of Spaniards. Just as Ana has taken revenge on the people who wronged her, such as her aunt Paulina and her father Anselmo, Saura hopes to show the audience that every child growing up under Franco's rule has been equally wronged by the regime (D. Kuehl, personal communication, October 2013). The final scene suggests that *any* child in that school could be the next murderer, just like Ana; in fact, it suggests that *all* the children of Ana's age *are* going to be just like her. With this cinematography, Saura begs the new government of Spain to seek retribution from the Franco regime and punish those who committed war crimes, even if they had been committed more than 30 years previously. Saura suggests that if his generation does not take responsibility to make amends for the past, then the future will only yield more children like Ana.

The atrocities of the past will never fade away. Thousands of people lie in unmarked graves throughout Spain's countryside. Although there are many people who want to leave the

Civil War as a forgotten part of history, it is simply not possible. The scars from this war-torn nation are still being periodically ripped open. It may have been wise in 1975 to enact legislation that ignored the balance between the victors and “the vanquished.”⁶⁵ However, today, the younger generations of Spaniards want to know what happened to their relatives who disappeared during the war. Barry Spector poses the question, “And why does the tragedy of the Spanish Republic, after all these years, still break the hearts of progressive people in every nation on Earth?”⁶⁶

In order to answer his question, we must look back to a different statement in which he said that there is something almost “mythic” about the Spanish Civil War. This conflict is still unsettling to think about because it happened long ago, yet it is still within the bounds of Spain’s collective, “living” memory. Spain today is still haunted by the memory of what happened then. Much like Ana’s hallucinations of her mother, the country is trying to make sense of all the pain of those years.

Especially for directors Victor Erice and Carlos Saura, distortions, caricatures and subversions were necessary to evade censorship. The films *El espíritu de la colmena*, *Cría cuervos* and *El laberinto del fauno* use distortions to seamlessly intertwine conflicting timelines, hallucinations and even different realms of existence. The conflict is centered around the heroines in the films in a ways that allow the directors to hyperbolize the reality around them. These young protagonists allow the viewer to ignore obvious political and social allegories that relate to Spain on a much more profound level.

⁶⁵ Mira, A (Ed.). (2005). *The cinema of Spain and Portugal*. London: Wallflower Press.

⁶⁶ Spector, B. (2009). Sacrifice of the children in *Pan’s Labyrinth* [Review of the film, *El laberinto del fauno*]. *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 3(3), 84.

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Summary of Capstone Project

This thesis revolves around the theme of Spanish Civil War films and the representations of Fascism in these films. I chose to focus my research paper on three canonical works of Spanish cinema: *El espíritu de la colmena* by Victor Erice (1973), *Cría cuervos* by Carlos Saura (1976) and Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno* (2006). Each of these films focuses on the imaginative journey of a young heroine as she tries to break from the rigid stipulations of the hegemonic Fascist regime.

The use of young heroines creates strong parallels among the films, as directors Erice, del Toro and Saura built their works on the basis of child-like curiosity. This type of character allowed Erice and Saura to subvert the oppressive Office of Censorship, which was active until 1977. These two directors, especially, used the actress Ana Torrent in order to maximize the use of the caricature. Because the heroine is so young in each of the films, her ideas can be marginalized.

In each of the films, the caricatures were used as a metaphor for Franco's Fascist regime. The majority of these distortions from reality can be categorized according to three seminal attributes of Fascism and Catholicism: family, home and memory. The fourth method of disseminating caricatures comes primarily from del Toro's film *El laberinto del fauno*, which capitalizes on its ability to create direct parallels between a fantasy world full of monsters and a fictionalized Spain from 1944.

The home is a metaphor for Spain in each of the films. The young protagonists are confined to their large homes. This is an allegorical depiction of immobility within the country.

Citizens were allowed to travel within the country, but it was difficult to exit or gain entry into the nation. This relationship between “the family” and “the nation” is further discussed in the next chapter, as the films depict characters in the same family who truly despise each other.

Family was the most important element in Spanish Fascism. It relied on a patriarch to establish control over his family. Besides the patriarch, there is a matriarch, who held a severely marginalized position within the family unit, and in regard to the children. This patriarchal model of rule is depicted in each of the films. The directors utilize Franco’s desired type of family and contort it. In each of the films, familial relationships act as the source of the protagonist’s primary conflict: Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena* cannot appeal to her parents when she is scared of the film *Frankenstein* because they have emotionally abandoned her; Ana in *Cría cuervos* tries to poison many members of her family, and finally, Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno* is murdered by her stepfather. These are not only toxic relationships; they are ultimately detrimental to the continuation of a family line.

It is vital, when discussing memory, to understand Spain’s history through the concept of “remembering.” Until 2007, it was systematically forbidden to discuss the Spanish Civil War. Therefore, the heroine in each of the films has a particular inability to comprehend the events of her past. History is never brought up in any of the films. The characters are neither living for tomorrow, nor thinking about the past. Each heroine has a unique method of escapism, which allows her to forget that she is living in a time that is meant to be forgotten. Ana in *El espíritu de la colmena*, hallucinates about the image of Frankenstein, a process which almost kills her. Ana in *Cría cuervos*, hallucinates about her mother, which confuses the timeline and shows how malleable our memories can become. Finally, Ofelia in *El laberinto del fauno* is unable to

remember her past at all, a method which aggressively, if not obviously, represents Spain's attempt to bury the events of its past.

Finally, throughout the films we learn that monsters can be real or imagined. In many cases, such as in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría cuervos*, the audience understands how imagined horrors and the memory of pain can be just as traumatizing as the monsters in the magical realm of *El laberinto del fauno*.

In conclusion, the three films connect the events of the past to events relevant at the time the movies premiered. The modern film *El laberinto del fauno* allows the audience to draw parallels between the nature of what we think is a monster, and that which can be even more dangerous to us: our own minds. The protagonists in the films strive to break from their unsatisfactory lives under the Franco regime. In order to do this, they use the only thing at their disposal: their imaginations.